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STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

## AN ALTERNATIVE FORCE DEPLOYMENT CONCEPT

BY

COMMANDER ERIC B. BYRNE United States Navy

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### USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

# **An Alternative Force Deployment Concept**

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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### **ABSTRACT**

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The United States Army of the Twenty-first Century is conducting force projection missions throughout the world (i.e., Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sinai). The Army also provides forces that are permanently stationed in foreign countries that carry out a presence or a deterrence mission (i.e., Korea and Germany). This paper examines the feasibility of satisfying the permanent Army presence commitments using unit rotations similar to that used to carry out the other overseas missions (i.e., Kuwait and Sinai). Additionally, this paper suggests that by using Army formations that conduct routine deployments of limited duration from stateside bases will actually enhance mission effectiveness. There are a number of advantages to changing the way the Army mans its overseas garrisons. With the appropriate restructuring and re-aligning of forces the Army could adopt a deployment strategy where cohesive formations are rotated overseas for regular and scheduled periods to carry out the varied missions assigned.

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## AN ALTERNATIVE FORCE DEPLOYMENT CONCEPT

Over the years the United States Army has evolved to become "the Nation's full spectrum force, capable of conducting prompt and sustained land operations across the entire spectrum of military operations." This process of change began as the end of the nineteenth century drew to a close. With the closing of the American western frontier the country found its continental borders relatively secure and the prospect of protecting overseas possessions a reality. The beginning of the twentieth century found the United States Army facing a new and unfamiliar situation; forces stationed overseas. Success in the Spanish-American War brought about the need for an American military presence in the Philippines and Hawaii.<sup>2</sup> The First World War provided the first modern instance of U.S. military force projection into Europe. Even though the initial overseas presence was short-lived; they were soon to return. About twenty years later during World War Two the Army found itself again fighting on foreign soil. Hostilities may have ended in 1945; however, this time the U.S. Army did not return home. Instead soldiers remained forward stationed in Europe, as well as, in many other areas of the world. For the past fifty-five years the Army has been typically forward stationed to provide a "permanent" presence in a foreign country. In many cases this was to act as a deterrent force against the Soviet Union or to prevent the spread of communist influence. With the end of the Cold War this deterrence mission has gradually faded in importance as overseas forces were brought home. However, as we enter the twenty-first century the United States government maintains a policy of global engagement and this dictates the need for a robust and diverse overseas military presence.<sup>3</sup> Although the Army has significantly reduced its troop strength it is today found permanently in Korea, Germany, Sinai, Kuwait, Bosnia and Kosovo carrying out various duties such as presence or deterrence missions, peacekeeping missions and United Nations observation missions. Also soldiers routinely deploy to Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America for recurring shorter periods of time to conduct exercises or short term humanitarian assistance with the large number of deployments can the Army afford to spend the resources to maintain the infrastructure which is necessary to support forces in garrison overseas? Is there a better way to meet the national commitments of the United States Army at a reduced cost in OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO without degrading the nation's combat capabilities?

The United States Army of the twenty-first century is conducting force projection missions throughout the world (i.e., Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sinai). It also provides forces that are permanently stationed in foreign countries that carry out a presence or a deterrence mission (i.e., Korea and Germany). Could the permanent presence commitments be met using a unit rotation plan similar to that used to carry out the other overseas missions (i.e., Kuwait and Sinai)? Could using formations that conduct routine deployments of a limited duration from stateside bases successfully fulfill this presence mission? There are a number of advantages to changing the way the Army mans its overseas garrisons. With the appropriate restructuring and re-aligning of forces the Army could adopt a deployment strategy

where cohesive formations are rotated overseas for regular and scheduled periods to carry out the varied missions assigned.

### **EARLIER ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENT EFFORTS**

This is not the first time the idea of routinely rotating forces overseas has been looked at by the United States Army. The Army has long realized maintaining forces permanently overseas with all the accompanying support infrastructure is a very expensive way of doing business. Taking care of the soldiers' families who necessarily accompany the soldiers overseas is also difficult and expensive. As far back as the 1950's the Army explored ways to rotate units overseas instead of sending individual replacements. In 1954 the United States Army proposed a different way to garrison Germany. Instead of replacing soldiers one for one, entire divisions would be periodically rotated between the United States and Europe. "As far as possible the families of the married personnel would accompany them concurrently." <sup>4</sup> This method would become known as "Operation Gyroscope. " The reasons for implementing this program were numerous but the expected advantages were an improvement in morale of the soldiers and their dependents, an increase in their combat effectiveness and a cost reduction associated with operating these forces.<sup>5</sup> In practice many difficulties were encountered moving, by ship, an entire division with families and most of its equipment. One significant problem that was never solved was the availability of sufficient family housing. There was not enough housing for the senior NCO's families so some married NCO's were reassigned prior to shipping out for Germany. 6 Overall the operation was judged successful in improving morale because it reduced the amount of family separation endured by soldiers deploying to Germany. One important conclusion drawn from this experience was problems exponentially increased with unit size for rotation. Units, smaller than divisions, seemed to rotate to Germany and integrate into their new settings much more rapidly with significantly fewer problems.

To summarize: rotation of battalion- or regimental-size units brought most of the anticipated Gyroscope advantages, with far fewer difficulties than did division-size exchanges. From the standpoint of the individual soldier, the anticipated goals of assignment stability, a sense of security... and a higher motivation for an Army career were adequately provided by the smaller unit moves. Moreover, small-unit exchanges brought about much less disruption of combat readiness, placed a lighter workload on the technical services, and required fewer personnel reassignments.<sup>8</sup>

After the Viet Nam conflict the United States Army once again looked to rotate its forces in Germany as a means to boost combat capability. With manpower no longer limitless because of the transition from a conscription based force to the All-Volunteer Force, the Army sought to increase combat troop strength while reducing the support personnel required of a permanently garrisoned force overseas. This time instead of rotating divisions, the Army would rotate reinforced brigades every six months between stateside posts and installations in Germany. This program came to be called "Brigade 76" but was short-lived.

It was the intent of the Army to return the TDY units to the United States after six months, replace them with other TDY units for the next six months, and continue the rotation indefinitely. But, in May 1976, Army Chief of Staff General Fred C. Weyand decided to convert most of the force to PCS status at the time of the next rotation in October 1976. General Weyand made this decision because of an adverse effect on the parent units in the United States in sustaining the rotation and because family separations caused by TDY for extended periods were damaging morale. <sup>10</sup>

Since 1976 many things have changed, such as the ability to transport forces has improved. Also, soldiers are now more accustomed to leaving their families for extended periods while they deploy unaccompanied to locations such as Kosovo, Bosnia or Kuwait. As the military continues to evolve, now is the time to re-examine the concept of rotating forces overseas to meet the Army's missions.

#### ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENT DESCRIPTION

A description of how the Army would rotate units forward on deployment is needed for a better understanding of what is envisioned. All Army Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) units would be considered deployable and their assigned personnel would be "home stationed" or "homesteaded" at forts or installations located within the continental United States (CONUS). Task organized, preferably brigade sized, units of these divisions would deploy to foreign locations where they would fall in on the equipment and weapons that are maintained on location. A skeleton garrison structure would be forward based for extended periods to allow for continuity, to conduct local liaison duties and to provide typical camp support functions. The parent division would deploy one task-organized brigade while the second or relieving unit conducted "work-up" training and certification in preparation for their deployment. The third brigade would only recently have returned from deployment and would be undergoing reconstitution, outfitting, personnel rotation, etc. This manning scheme is sometimes referred to as the "Rule of Threes."

### ADVANTAGES OF ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENT

Deploying Army units from their continental United States installations to overseas bases and camps for a limited duration on a rotating basis would yield a number of advantages. This method of "manning the outposts" would necessarily reduce the costs that are derived from supporting the soldiers' dependents and the robust overseas infrastructure that is associated with their support. This method would more evenly spread the burden of deployment among more of the force, which would reduce the amount of time, on average, spent away from home for the typical soldier. Many of these overseas commitments are known and can be expected to continue. This would allow unit rotation schedules to be developed and promulgated years in advance, allowing soldiers to plan their careers with less uncertainty. Furthermore, Army manning authorities would be able to monitor and reduce PERSTEMPO throughout the force by taking advantage of these long-range schedules.

With a future schedule known, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve components could also be better integrated into the overall deployment plan for The Army, once again reducing turbulence and spreading the burden of deployment. Another benefit of routinely deploying forces from CONUS based installations is the ability to "homestead" soldiers and their families. Soldiers would be able to

spend a greater part of their careers stationed at a single post or locale, which would necessarily reduce the cost and stress of repeated moves to new duty stations. Since units will regularly deploy against known threats in known environments, commanders could more efficiently spend training dollars by focusing their training primarily on the type duties to be expected during this upcoming deployment. These advantages will be expanded upon in the paragraphs below.

#### **COST REDUCTIONS**

At present the U.S. Army has nearly one quarter of its active duty force, over 110,000 personnel, stationed overseas in such locations as Germany (approximately 50,000), Bosnia (approximately 9,000), Kosovo (approximately 7,000), Sinai (approximately 950)<sup>11</sup>, Korea (approximately 27,000)<sup>12</sup>, Japan (approximately 1700)<sup>13</sup> and Kuwait/Arabian Gulf basin (approximately 2900).<sup>14</sup> (See figure 1.) While forces are deployed to Bosnia, Kosovo, Sinai and Kuwait without families or extensive civilian support, the remainder of the forward-stationed personnel are quartered with their families in a manner similar

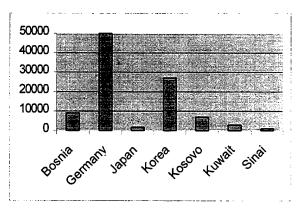


FIGURE 1: OVERSEAS FORCE LEVELS

to that found at a stateside post. This means there is the significant expense of maintaining the added infrastructure to support these non-combatants. To illuminate the size of this "baggage train" take the US Army in Japan, though a small contingent, it is representative of how the Army supports its overseas

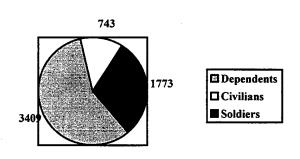


FIGURE 2: STRENGTH OF THE U.S. ARMY IN JAPAN

garrisons. Primarily located at Camp Zama on Honshu and also on Okinawa these soldiers are normally accompanied by their families. As of October 1999 Army force strength in Japan stood at 1,773 soldiers. Another 743 civilians worked for the Department of the Army while the total number of military dependents was 3,409. (See Figure 2.) This means for every soldier nearly two and one half noncombatants must be supported and cared for in a foreign country. This example did not

include the Department of Defense Schools (DoDDS) civilians also supporting all United States military forces in Japan. Deviously a great deal of money is spent maintaining and supporting the facilities and services for the benefit of the families and civilians. Imagine what the cost is for the US Army in Europe (USAREUR), specifically Germany with about 50,000 soldiers stationed there with their families. If the

ratio of non-combatants to soldiers in Germany is comparable to that of Japan, that means there are about 125,000 or more civilians and family members being supported and cared for!

Another significant cost of maintaining the soldiers' families overseas is the expense of moving the families' household goods to and from the overseas postings every two or three years. A recent study conducted by the RAND Corporation analyzed the costs associated with carrying out permanent change of station (PCS) moves for the U. S. Army forces in Europe. This study concluded the annual cost of moving families with the soldiers was approximately \$600 million in 1997 dollars! If the Army commitments in Germany could be met using forces that rotated from the United States for limited duration, unaccompanied deployments then these costs would be reduced significantly.

#### **BURDEN SHARING**

In this period of relatively high OPTEMPO, the typical soldier is experiencing a great deal of turbulence from the numerous and sometimes short-fused deployments. This is having an adverse impact on the retention of soldiers and officers alike. <sup>17</sup> Perhaps this poor retention trend could be reversed if deployments were less frequent and regularly scheduled well in to the future. If the Army were to change the way it forward stationed its soldiers then it is likely the burden of deployment could be more evenly spread throughout the Army. As an example, in the past the Balkan deployment burden was carried, for the most part, by soldiers stationed in Germany. If Bosnia, Kosovo and Germany were all manned in the same way, by units rotating forward from stateside bases, then the more numerous stateside forces could necessarily carry the deployment load more evenly. With this greater pool of deployable personnel then deployment timetables or schedules can be developed and promulgated. This would provide stability and future certainty to the soldiers so they can plan their careers and their family lives.

Once a long-term plan to meet overseas manning commitments is developed then a number of related advantages can be realized. Within this plan or schedule a unit or units should also be identified which will respond to new crises; as well as, those units which will forward deploy. Today units of the XVIII Airborne Corps provide the forces that are kept on stand-by or alert to rapidly respond. Using relatively firm deployment schedules, planners could rotate more and different units through the "alert windows." A unit would be scheduled for a limited period of time, or window, when it would be on alert. This period of alert could be scheduled in a manner similar to the method used to schedule a unit for overseas deployment.

## OPTEMPO MONITORING AND PERSTEMPO CONTROL

An example of another service's attempt to fix both the OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO dilemma is what the United States Air Force is doing today. Right now it is converting its force from an organization not expected to rapidly forward deploy to an organization whose primary purpose is to be able to carry out power projection missions from expeditionary settings. This new Air Expeditionary Force has begun scheduling units for "routine" deployments overseas and, also, has begun scheduling units to stand alert

for an equal amount of time.<sup>18</sup> The Air Force took this drastic step of restructuring its entire force to gain control over the numerous deployments that many of their people were making with little or no warning. In the past, the number of deployments made by an individual airman in a given time period (sometimes called PERSTEMPO) was not tracked. Consequently, some personnel with "high demand, low density" skills were being constantly deployed while other personnel did not deploy at all.<sup>19</sup>

The Army has also had these problems with extremely high PERSTEMPO for some of its soldiers. A way to monitor PERSTEMPO, with the idea of trying to reduce it for the individual soldier, is to examine a unit's frequency of deployment and the length of those deployments within a given period of time. This is a rough description of OPTEMPO. If all deployable units are monitored and their schedules are developed with their OPTEMPO controlled, then all the soldiers assigned to deploying units should be experiencing a similar PERSTEMPO. The next method of PERSTEMPO control is to monitor the time a soldier spends in a deploying unit. Once a soldier has spent "enough time" deployed then he or she would be transferred to a non-deploying unit or billet, such as those associated with base operations, training, schooling, recruiting, etc. This method of regulating PERSTEMPO is taken from the basic process used by the United States Navy to control and limit the amount of time a typical Sailor will spend deployed. Even during this time of reduced force structure, fewer personnel and higher OPTEMPO the Navy is able to spread the increased deployment burden in a reasonably equitable manner. The key to success in this endeavor is the ability to develop and follow a long-term schedule that is both realistic and takes into account the possibility of a crisis occurring.

#### ACTIVE COMPONENT/RESERVE COMPONENT INTEGRATION

Another advantage of a force-wide, regular deployment schedule would be the improved ability to better integrate the reserve components into the Army's missions. With a known schedule that stretches two or three years into the future, the time exists to adequately recruit, train, retain and prepare a reserve formation for an overseas mission. We are seeing this today in Bosnia with the National Guard's 49th Armored Division which recently forward deployed to Tuzla. With adequate and timely notification there should be no reason why the reserve components cannot plan, train and execute these types of peace keeping or deterrence missions as well as any active component unit. Besides helping to carry the burden of deployment, the reserve units could be developed to become the repository of experience and expertise for a given area. For example, if a given reserve unit was targeted to deploy to Kosovo every third year on a six month rotation then the soldiers with previous tours in Kosovo could preferentially affiliate with that unit. Also the long-term reservists would gain experience by conducting repeated deployments to the same geographical area. Carrying this one step further the reserve unit could be associated with an active component unit that also deploys to the same region. These units could help to train each other when both units are stateside, especially if both units are physically stationed near each other. Another benefit of tying together active and reserve units is the existence of a pool of trained and experienced soldiers from which the reserve unit can recruit. The active unit's soldiers who are

completing their enlistment or commitment already have a regional expertise and a working relationship with the associated reserve unit so they may be more willing to affiliate with that reserve unit.

#### **HOMESTEADING**

With brigades of a parent division deploying to a particular region of the world and returning to the same stateside post, a significant proportion of the force should be able to "homestead or home station" in or near that post. What I mean by "homestead" or "home station" is the soldier's family would be afforded the opportunity to remain in the same geographic locale for an extended number of years covering multiple tours. Soldiers would rotate between deploying units and non-deploying units at the same post, which would allow for a cadre of experienced mid-level and senior leaders, officer and enlisted, to become established within the military and civilian communities. The advantages of this "homesteading" are threefold; reduced cost, reduced turbulence and individual improved skill level. The cost savings are associated with the reduction in moves experienced by the typical service member. If a family moves twice in twenty years instead of, say, nine times, the cost savings would obviously be substantial. Since families are not uprooted routinely the spouse could perhaps find more stable, long term and rewarding work. One recent study has found that frequent PCS moves have caused the typical pay for military spouses be 13% to 34% below that which is earned by their civilian counterparts. <sup>20</sup>

A soldier who joins the Army with the expectations of living in a certain area of this country, performing a certain type of job and deploying to a particular region of the world will have the motivation to become more proficient at his profession. Since the soldier faces repeated deployments to the same location for perhaps his or her entire career, he or she will have a vested interest in becoming proficient at speaking the local language and learning the local culture, geography, governmental policies, etc. Along with repeated deployments to the same area, this extensive, localized knowledge of a particular theater of operations should, perhaps, make for a much more capable soldier.

#### STREAMLINED TRAINING

This concept of continuously rotating forces between CONUS and locations overseas is dependent upon the ability of units to train to a common standard. Each formation arriving on station must have the same capabilities as the unit it is relieving. Personnel within a unit that is forward deployed will no longer have the luxury of a three year tour to slowly "learn the ropes" of their new "duty station." The unit will have to arrive in country and hit the ground running. The way to do this successfully is to have focused, timely and up-to-date training. Once a unit is scheduled for a particular deployment or mission, such as peacekeeping, deterrence, NATO Partnership for Peace initiatives, UN observation, or even if only to standby as the alert force, the training and exercise schedules could be tailored to prepare the personnel for the upcoming mission. With a focused training plan the cost of conducting training not directly beneficial for the upcoming rotation is avoided. The training path is further streamlined by utilizing the soldiers that have recently returned from duty at the same overseas location. Once again another cost savings could be realized by having the veterans use their recent experiences to validate the training

being given. All training that is not germane to the upcoming deployment could be eliminated. This is where the "Rule of Threes" in the manning scheme comes into play. A brigade that is in the cycle of routine deployments would always be able to draw on the experiences of the soldiers in a sister brigade who have only recently returned, since some portion of the parent unit would always be rotating back to the continental United States. As time goes by this feedback and building up of unit experience will be strengthened and even greater efficiencies in preparing the units for overseas duty should be realized.

#### DEPLOYABLE ARMY STRUCTURE

As this process of deploying units takes hold, more and more units within the Army will become trained in the various missions tied to power projection deployments. Since units will regularly deploy they will become more proficient at the skills required to quickly and efficiently move overseas. This process will then yield an Army that is inherently more flexible when responding to crises since the act of deployment would have now become a core capability. In many ways this new Army would appear to share similar structures with the other services. Right now the United States Air Force is building or transitioning to ten Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEF's) with the idea of deploying two AEF's at a time to cover overseas commitments and any crisis responses. The United States Navy maintains twelve aircraft carriers from which it generates eleven aircraft carrier battle groups (CVBG's) of which ten are usually rotated in the schedule to maintain two CVBG's deployed overseas while one CVBG remains forward stationed in Japan. The Navy follows a similar pattern with its twelve Amphibious Ready Groups. The key here is ten deployment capable units, which would align with the structure of today's active duty Army.

Presently the Army has ten active duty divisions, nine of which contain three brigades and the remaining light division has two brigades. Two Armored Cavalry Regiments, which are each equivalent to a brigade in manning, are also available for deployment in support of the light division. With some force realignment these divisions could become the Army's "expeditionary" deploying units. A more likely scenario would be brigade-sized formations deploying. A division, with three deployable brigades, can maintain a forward deployed, brigade-sized presence using the "Rule of Three's." Also, by aligning the National Guard divisions and the Army Reserve units to the active component divisions, even greater flexibility can be exercised to reduce the average soldier's PERSTEMPO even in the face of rising OPTEMPO. Our allies in Europe, Britain and Germany have moved to this strategy of deploying brigade-sized forces because of the economic efficiencies that are gained. 22

In essence this proposal is an attempt to provide a different way for the Department of the Army to carry out the varied missions it is tasked with. The other services have also had to face the dramatic shift in the missions they are expected complete. The Air Force has responded by reshaping itself into a number of deploying power projection units or formations. The Navy and Marine Corps team has long been shaped around deploying groups of ships and forces. In this era of change the Army is evaluating many different ideas on how it can become more deployable and responsive while maintaining the force's

lethality and survivability.<sup>23</sup> This concept is one method, which could help to make the Army more deployable. Also it would preserve the basic structures of Army units, brigades and divisions, while also providing a long term cost savings with the added benefit of reduced turbulence for the soldier and his or her family. As with all ideas there are drawbacks, which must be identified and considered before any decisions, or changes can be implemented.

#### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

This method of deploying forces will have to be slowly implemented. The culture of the Army and the mindset of many unit commanders will have to change. No longer will commanders be able to focus solely on training their units on the war fighting tasks required in a major theater war. Now all units will be expected to become proficient in more and different types of missions that cover the full spectrum of military operations. However, no one can be proficient at all missions at all times so perceived readiness for certain missions will be degraded. This will have to be accounted for, perhaps with a form of tiered readiness. Also, as units rotate in and out of locations where they carry out military operations other than war (MOOTW) their normal warfighting skill sets will degrade. Once again, this is a problem that can be addressed with a form of tiered readiness. Soldiers will have to become accustomed to unaccompanied deployments lasting significant amounts of time. Also, all soldiers will have to expect to routinely deploy as a regular part of every career path.

As we stand at the edge of the Twenty-first Century we see our world, the United States and our military changing. The Army is deep into self-assessment in an attempt to pull ahead of this dynamic of change. To maintain relevance the Army must undergo dramatic change, making itself more mobile, more lethal and more cost efficient. To build on this the Army will need to change its mindset and shift its paradigms. It will have to develop a force that expects to routinely deploy forward from its stateside homes. Perhaps this new expeditionary Army, composed of brigade-sized, deploying formations, is the way ahead.

Word Count = 4535

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